

In just over the 3 years since Newtown, more than 111,300 people have been killed by someone using a gun in America. In my State of Maryland, in 2015 alone, more than 340 Marylanders have lost their lives to homicide by guns.

Yet, despite the national consensus for legislation to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists and convicted felons and domestic abusers, a vocal minority, led by the National Rifle Association, stands in the way of commonsense proposals to keep our Nation safer.

Those voices are forcing a false choice between constitutional rights and safe streets. We can do both. Congress can and must enact laws that improve the public safety while respecting the Constitution.

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This Congress has no right to hold moments of silence anymore and then do nothing to prevent the next tragedy. This is a moment of truth for Congress. We cannot have another moment of silence without action. We can and should expand and strengthen our background checks and pass the bipartisan no fly, no buy bill to keep guns out of the hands of suspected terrorists.

So today what we know is that across this country there are people who go to unlicensed dealers at gun shows and do what they could not do if they went to Walmart to get a gun, and that is to get one without passing a background check. These unlicensed dealers are a significant source of crimes in my State and across the country, with an estimate of 40 percent of all purchases made through them without a background check.

Studies show that background checks actually do stop 170 felons, 50 domestic abusers, and 20 fugitives every single day from buying weapons. It works when you do it.

Recent polling shows that universal background checks are universally supported across the political spectrum. A CBS poll released just last week showed that 89 percent of the public supports legislation requiring background checks—the low-hanging fruit, the common denominator—and that includes 97 percent of Democrats, 92 percent of Republicans, and 82 percent of Independents. Who is left out? The vocal minority led by the National Rifle Association.

Let's talk about the National Rifle Association, Mr. Speaker, because they actually used to support universal background checks at gun shows.

On May 27, 1999, Wayne LaPierre, the current executive president and CEO of the National Rifle Association, testified before the House Judiciary Committee about 1 month before Columbine, in which 12 high school students and one teacher were murdered. He said this: "We think it's reasonable to provide mandatory instant background checks for every sale at every

gun show. No loopholes anywhere for anyone." That is a direct quote from Wayne LaPierre of the National Rifle Association.

When did they change? When it became politically expedient to do the job of the gun industry. So, unfortunately, they have flipped their position. They no longer support expanded background checks, and they have worked to prohibit that action here in Congress.

So I will say, Mr. Speaker, to Speaker RYAN and to my Republican colleagues: Enough already. We are tired. We are done. It is past time for the Congress to listen to the American public instead of to the National Rifle Association, to listen to the overwhelming number of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, and to take guns out of the hands of terrorists, convicted felons, and those who would do harm to others.

No bill, no break. It is time to disarm hate.

COMMONSENSE GUN CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS. Mr. Speaker, I would ask that all of my colleagues join me on the floor.

On occasion, Mr. Speaker, I have had what I call an executive session with myself. For months, even for years, through several sessions of Congress, I wondered what would bring this body to take action, what would finally make Congress do what is right, what is just, what the people of this country have been demanding, and what is long overdue.

We have lost hundreds and thousands of innocent people to gun violence: tiny little children, babies, students and teachers, mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, daughters and sons, friends and neighbors.

What has this body done? Mr. Speaker, nothing. Not one thing. We have turned deaf ears. We have turned deaf ears to the blood of the innocent and the concern of our Nation. We are blind to a crisis.

Mr. Speaker, where is the heart of this body? Where is our soul? Where is our moral leadership? Where is our courage? Those who work on bipartisan solutions are pushed aside. Those who pursue commonsense improvement are beaten down. Reason is criticized. Obstruction is praised.

Newtown, Aurora, Charleston, Orlando. What is the tipping point? Are we blind? Can we see? How many more mothers and how many more fathers need to shed tears of grief before we do something?

We were elected to lead, Mr. Speaker. We must be headlights and not tail-lights. We cannot continue to stick our heads in the sand and ignore the reality of mass gun violence in our Nation.

Deadly mass shootings are becoming more and more frequent. Mr. Speaker, this is a fact. It is not an opinion.

We must remove the blinders. The time for silence and patience is long gone. We are calling on the leadership of the House to bring commonsense gun control legislation to the House floor. Give us a vote. Let us vote. We came here to do our job. We came here to work.

The American people are demanding action. Do we have the courage? Do we have raw courage to make at least a down payment on ending gun violence in America?

We can no longer wait. We can no longer be patient. So today we come to the well of the House to dramatize the need for action—not next month, not next year, but now, today.

Sometimes you have to do something out of the ordinary. Sometimes you have to make a way out of no way. We have been too quiet for too long. There comes a time when you have to say something, when you have to make a little noise, and when you have to move your feet. This is the time.

Now is the time to get in the way. The time to act is now. We will be silent no more. The time for silence is over.

COMMONSENSE GUN CONTROL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON) for 2 minutes.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleagues. For all of America that is listening, you just heard the soul of the United States Congress speak. The soul of this Nation cries out for a vote.

We are gathered here on this floor today to accomplish a single goal. We implore and we ask our colleagues—our colleague from Georgia stood on that side to appeal to the better angels on that side of the aisle—to provide us with the simple dignity that every American is calling for: a vote.

Mr. LEWIS. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. LEWIS. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. LARSON), my friend and brother, for yielding.

Now is the time for us to find a way to dramatize it, to make it real. We have to occupy the floor of the House until there is action.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Mr. Speaker, reclaiming my time, rise up, Democrats. Rise up, Americans. This cannot stand. We will occupy this floor. We will no longer be denied a right to vote.

Mr. HOYER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. I yield to the gentleman from Maryland, our minority whip and leader.

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, we sit down so we can stand up for America.